



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2018/001

Audit of the Science, Technology and Implementation programme at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

There was need to strengthen controls for efficient and effective management of the programme

15 January 2018
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Audit of the Science, Technology and Implementation programme at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the Science, Technology and Implementation (STI) programme at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes over the efficient and effective management of the STI programme. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2015 to 30 September 2017 and included a review of: (i) governance and strategic management; (ii) operations management; (iii) resource mobilization; and (iv) management of implementing partners.

While the activities of the STI programme were undertaken in accordance with the 10-year strategic plan and framework (2008–2018) to enhance the implementation of the Convention, there was need to strengthen controls for efficient and effective management of the programme.

OIOS made 8 recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, UNCCD needed to:

- Establish a mechanism for tracking the implementation of all decisions of the Conference of the Parties and provide a status report on their implementation;
- Ensure that: (i) the STI programme develops annual or biannual work plans showing the deliverables of each unit or function within the programme, the timelines of delivery and the persons responsible for delivery; and (ii) individual work plans of staff are linked to the programme work plans;
- Ensure that outputs and corresponding outcomes are monitored and reported periodically as required by the Convention's operating procedures;
- Ensure that additional supervisors are included in the performance planning and evaluation process for staff whose roles and responsibilities transcend beyond those that fall under the STI programme;
- In consultation with its Legal Office, ensure that all partnership arrangements within the programme are formalized and documented in accordance with its partnership strategy;
- Review all partnership agreements under the programme and ensure that they are up to date and aligned with the Convention's 2018-2030 Strategic Framework;
- Ensure that all partnership agreements for the programme are monitored using the agreement tracking journal as outlined in the Convention's Partnership Strategy; and
- Ensure that all partnership documents are maintained and managed from the newly established document management system.

UNCCD accepted the recommendations and has initiated action to implement them.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
I. BACKGROUND	1-2
II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	2
III. AUDIT RESULTS	2-9
A. Governance and strategic management	2-3
B. Operations management	3-5
C. Resource mobilization	5-6
D. Management of implementing partners	6-9
IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	9
ANNEX I Status of audit recommendations	
APPENDIX I Management response	

Audit of the Science, Technology and Implementation programme at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the Science, Technology and Implementation programme (STI programme) at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).
2. UNCCD was established in 1994 as the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management. The Convention which is based in Bonn, Germany has 196 parties which established the Conference of the Parties (COP or the Parties) as the supreme decision-making body. UNCCD comprises the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism. The role of the Secretariat is to service the COP and its subsidiary bodies in a manner that enables well-founded decision-making and successful action in advancing the implementation of the UNCCD. On the other hand, the Global Mechanism is tasked with translating the Convention into action and achieving Land Degradation Neutrality at the national level.
3. According to the UNCCD 10-year strategic plan and framework (2008-2018) to enhance the implementation of the Convention (The Strategy), the vision of the Parties is "to forge a global partnership to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and to mitigate the effects of drought in affected areas in order to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability". The Strategy was reviewed for the next period (2018-2030) by an Intergovernmental Working Group that was approved by the COP during its COP 12 meeting held in Ankara, Turkey in October 2015. The draft document titled "The UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework" was presented to the COP during its 13th session held in Ordos, China in September 2017 and adopted by its decision 7/COP.13.
4. One of the programmes within the Convention's Secretariat which implemented the Strategy was the STI programme. Until January 2016, the STI programme was split into two units: the Knowledge Management, Science and Technology Programme and the Facilitation and Monitoring of Implementation Programme. These two programmes were consolidated into one programme whose core functions were to: (i) support scientific cooperation; (ii) facilitate reporting and assessment of information submitted by the COP; and (iii) support countries within the five Regional Implementation Annexes of UNCCD to implement the strategy. The STI programme also managed the capacity-building and knowledge management functions of the Secretariat.
5. In carrying out its activities, the STI programme supported the work of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), the Science-Policy Interface (SPI), and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC). The CST provided the COP with information and advice on scientific and technological matters relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought while the SPI developed policy-oriented proposals for consideration by the COP. The CRIC provided to the COP targeted recommendations on implementation and reviewed the findings from the reporting process facilitated by the STI programme.
6. The STI programme had a team of 17 members of staff, 14 of who were funded through the core budget and the remaining 3 through extra budgetary resources. The 17 staff comprised two P-5, nine P-4, one P-3, two P-2 and three G-5 staff. The programme was headed by a Chief at P-5 level. In 2014-2015, the UNCCD core budget for the STI programme was Euro 3,867,375 while in 2016-2017 the core budget amounted to Euro 3,953,400. The extra-budgetary resources for 2014-2015 and 2016 up to August 2017 were Euro 1,772,424 and Euro 815,012 respectively.

7. Comments provided by UNCCD are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

8. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes over the efficient and effective management of the STI programme at UNCCD.

9. This audit was included in the 2017 risk-based work plan of OIOS in view of the risks associated with the programme which could potentially affect the attainment of the Convention's mandates.

10. OIOS conducted this audit in October and November 2017. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2015 to 30 September 2017. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered risk areas pertaining to the STI programme which included: (i) governance and strategic management; (ii) operations management; (iii) resource mobilization; and (iv) management of implementing partners.

11. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel; (b) reviews of relevant documentation; (c) analytical reviews of data; and (d) judgmental sample testing.

12. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Governance and strategic management

Action was initiated to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals with UNCCD's mandate

13. In recognition of the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) which was held in Rio in June 2012, the UNCCD COP, through decision 8/COP.11, established an Intergovernmental Working Group to define Land Degradation and Neutrality (LDN) which was a core component of sustainable development. In September 2015, the General Assembly adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 associated targets and established an Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators to develop indicators for monitoring of SDG targets at a global level. Through decision 3/COP.12, the COP identified target 15.3 as a strong vehicle for driving the UNCCD mandate and the Convention became the custodian agency for SDG indicator 15.3.1, which is "proportion of land that is degraded over total land area".

14. Since then, the COP has supported the UNCCD secretariat in integrating SDG 15 and related target 15.3 into the implementation of the Convention mandate. The Secretariat has identified five essential areas of integration which included: (i) setting LDN targets; (ii) catalyzing the multiple benefits that LDN provides; (iii) creating partnerships and resource mobilization; (iv) designing and implementing bold transformative LDN projects; and (v) tracking progress towards achieving the LDN targets through monitoring and reporting.

15. UNCCD has made progress in integration of SDG target 15.3. For example, during its 13th session held in September 2017, the COP adopted the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework whose five strategic objectives were aligned to meeting SDG target 15.3. Further, as of September 2017, 113 out of the 196 Parties had committed to set voluntary LDN targets and were receiving guidance from both the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism on how to formulate national targets. Parties were exploring how to

integrate the voluntary LDN targets into their National Action Programmes. UNCCD had also established an inter-agency advisory group on SDG indicator 15.3.1, which included the other two Rio convention agencies: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; and the Convention on Biological Diversity. OIOS therefore concluded that UNCCD has initiated appropriate action in integrating SDG goal 15.3 in the implementation of its mandate.

Need to track the implementation of COP decisions

16. According to Article 23 of the Convention, the UNCCD Secretariat was mandated to service the sessions of the COP and its subsidiary bodies. This included preparation of substantive documentation and logistical arrangements for the sessions. In this regard monitoring of and reporting on the implementation of COP decisions was a key function of the Secretariat.

17. In 2016, the UNCCD Secretariat prepared a table of all COP decisions that were adopted during its 12th session held in September 2015 in Ankara, Turkey. The table outlined the decisions that required action and the respective units within the Convention programmes that were responsible for implementing those decisions. Of the 22 decisions made, the STI programme was involved in implementing 10.

18. The STI programme did not have a formal system in place for tracking the implementation of the COP decisions that were under its purview. As a result, OIOS was not able to establish whether these decisions had been implemented in line with the COP requirements. Without an adequate tracking mechanism, UNCCD was at risk of not implementing all the COP decisions as required which could preclude it from achieving its goals and objectives.

(1) UNCCD should establish a mechanism for tracking the implementation of all COP decisions and provide a status report on their implementation.

UNCCD accepted recommendation 1 and stated that COP decisions were listed in an Excel sheet and responsible units indicated for each relevant paragraph. The content of these paragraphs would be reflected in the UNCCD work programme for the biennium, and follow-up to implementation monitored as part of the regular internal monitoring. Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt of evidence that implementation of COP decisions was being tracked and status reports were being produced.

B. Operations management

Need to strengthen accountability for the STI programme

19. According to paragraph 6.1 and 6.2 of ST/AI/2010/5 (Performance Management and Development System), in order to strengthen accountability, departments, offices or missions are required to prepare work plans for each of their work units in consultation with staff members on an annual or biennial basis. Once the objectives of the work unit are understood, individual work plans are prepared by the staff with the support of their supervisors.

20. OIOS noted that the STI programme did not have a work plan and did not articulate at the beginning of the biennium the deliverables which would contribute to accomplishment of the Convention's outcomes. As a result, the programme did not have a basis for measuring success and ensuring accountability. While staff members had developed their individual performance work plans within the performance appraisal system, the lack of a work plan at the programme level meant there was no link between the deliverables of the individual staff and the Convention's intended outcomes.

- (2) UNCCD should ensure that: (i) the Science, Technology and Implementation programme develops annual or biannual work plans showing the deliverables of each unit or function within the programme, the timelines of delivery and the persons responsible for delivery; and (ii) individual work plans of staff are linked to the programme work plans.**

UNCCD accepted recommendation 2 and stated that the STI work programme was developed with, and integrated into, the UNCCD corporate work programme for 2018-2019, which was built on the results framework that was approved by the COP. Each outcome and outcome indicator of the results framework was in the corporate work programme specified through targets and indicating a unit in charge for each target. Main outputs/deliverables and the unit in charge of each were also listed. OIOS notes that the work programme referred to by UNCCD was in draft form and some targets and deliverables were not fully defined. Therefore, recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of evidence: (i) of an approved and comprehensive work plan showing deliverables for each unit or function within the programme, the timelines of delivery and the persons responsible for delivery; and (ii) that individual staff work plans are linked to the programme work plan.

Need for regular monitoring of performance

21. According to the operating procedures on monitoring of progress in implementing the work plan, substantive units were required to prepare monitoring reports every six months.

22. UNCCD did not adhere to this requirement and for the 2016-2017 biennium, it prepared only one interim report dated 1 March 2017. Without regular monitoring of programme activities, there was a risk that challenges in implementation would not be detected and addressed in a timely manner. Regular monitoring reports provide management with an opportunity to assess whether the desired outcomes are being achieved with the ongoing programme activities and make any necessary changes in a timely manner.

- (3) UNCCD should ensure that outputs and corresponding outcomes are monitored and reported periodically as required by the Convention's operating procedures.**

UNCCD accepted recommendation 3 and stated that the Secretariat would monitor progress toward targets and delivery of indicated outputs on a regular basis, approximately every six months. Internal monitoring would be the basis for reporting on performance in meeting the expected outcomes to the COP. Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of evidence that outputs and outcomes were monitored and reported periodically.

Need to enhance staff accountability within the STI programme

23. According to paragraph 3.3 of ST/AI/2010/5 on Performance Management and Development System, if a staff member remains in the same functions but serves under successive supervisors during the year, his/her performance cycle should not only be evaluated by the supervisor at the time the performance cycle ends, but prior supervisors should be consulted or, if applicable, act as additional supervisors for the relevant workplan goals. Paragraph 5.2 of the same administrative instruction states that up to two additional supervisors may be designated when a staff member works for more than one supervisor for more than 25 per cent of his/her time or for assignments of at least 30 working days.

24. Within the STI programme were sub-units or functions that provided support and worked with other programmes within the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism. The Regional Coordination Units (RCUs), for example, were representatives of UNCCD and supported implementation of the Convention over five regional implementation annexes – Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern

Mediterranean, and Central and Eastern Europe. Their work went beyond STI activities and included awareness raising activities under the External Relations, Policy and Advocacy programme (ERPA). RCUs also supported Parties in the setting of LDN targets under the LDN Target Setting programme (LDN TSP) which was spearheaded by the Global Mechanism. Other sub-units within the programme such as Knowledge Management and Capacity Building also provided services that were cross-cutting in nature and which were under the supervision of the ERPA in addition to the STI programme.

25. Apart from providing support to the CST and the SPI, staff within the Science and Technology sub-unit also worked with the Global Mechanism. One staff member within this sub-unit spent between 30 to 60 per cent of her time in 2016-2017 helping in establishment of the LDN TSP framework which included providing technical support, written guidance and verifying spatial data to country Parties to aid them in their reporting. A Coordinator for one of the RCUs also spent over 50 per cent of her time in 2016-2017 supporting with LDN TSP activities, including data dissemination and verification of LDN target setting.

26. Despite having roles and responsibilities that transcended beyond the STI programme, these staff only had the STI programme Chief as their supervisor and their performance plans and evaluations were agreed and reviewed only with him. There was no evidence that supervisors from ERPA and Global Mechanism provided input to appraisal of staff from the STI programme who were assigned responsibilities in the respective functional programmes. This situation weakened the accountability of staff as they could not be held responsible for these additional responsibilities.

(4) UNCCD should ensure that additional supervisors are included in the performance planning and evaluation process for staff whose roles and responsibilities transcend beyond those that fall under the Science, Technology and Implementation programme.

UNCCD accepted recommendation 4 and stated that the Performance Appraisal System (PAS) that was currently in use did not include additional supervisors in the staff planning and evaluation cycle. However, the Secretariat would ensure that in the next PAS cycle beginning April 2018 to March 2019, additional supervisors would be given the opportunity to provide comments for staff members who were assigned specific tasks outside the STI programme. Recommendation 4 remains open pending receipt of evidence that additional supervisors are included in the performance planning and evaluation process for staff whose roles and responsibilities transcend beyond the STI programme.

C. Resource mobilization

Adequate mechanisms were in place for managing core and extra budgetary resources

27. The work of the UNCCD STI programme was funded from the core budget and voluntary financing. In 2014-2015, the programme had a core budget of Euro 3,867,375 and voluntary funding amounting to Euro 1,772,424. In 2016-2017 (up to August 2017), the core budget and voluntary funding amounted to Euro 3,953,400 and Euro 815,012 respectively. While the core budget was used to fund activities under the multi-year work plan, the extra budgetary funding supplemented these core activities, including the implementation of the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal which was later expanded and rebranded as the Knowledge Hub, the work of the SPI, the expansion of the Sustainable Land Management best practices database and the capacity building marketplace, as well as funding of three posts.

28. UNCCD included resource mobilization as part of its Strategic Framework and employed various approaches in its resource mobilization efforts. The Secretariat followed up on outstanding contributions from the Parties in line with decision 10/COP.12 and presented to the Parties all activities that required voluntary funding. The Secretariat also developed strategic alliances with other organizations that could

enhance the Convention's mandate in line with decision 3/COP.12. This included the inter-agency advisory group on SDG indicator 15.3.1 as well as alliances with entities that could support the implementation of the LDN Target Setting Programme. In line with decision 10/COP.12, UNCCD reported on the status of the core contributions as well as the trust fund established for the voluntary contribution. UNCCD also reported to its donors on the utilization of the voluntary funds. OIOS therefore concluded that the mechanisms for managing core and extra budgetary resources for the STI programme were adequate.

D. Management of implementing partners

29. UNCCD had, over the years, established collaborative partnerships at various levels which were considered essential for the successful implementation of its 10-year strategic plan and framework. Partnerships and strategic collaborations were also considered as one of the five elements for integration of SDG Goal 15 and target 15.3 into the implementation of the Convention.

30. In 2016, UNCCD developed a partnership strategy which provided guidance on the ways the Secretariat intended to collaborate with its partners and provided a consistent approach to partner selection, implementation of activities, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of partnership outcomes. Prior to that, an independent evaluation of the Secretariat and Global Mechanism partnerships was conducted by an external consultant in September 2015.

31. OIOS reviewed 24 partnership arrangements for the STI programme for three of its functional areas. These were: (i) Knowledge Management; (ii) Capacity Building Marketplace; and (iii) Regional Coordinating Units. The results of the review are summarized below.

Need to formalize partnership arrangements in line with the UNCCD partnership strategy

32. According to Annex 2, Step 4 of the partnership strategy, partnership agreements should be formalized using applicable standard procedures; partnership commitments should be recorded in an agreement where objectives and working modalities are specified.

33. From the review, OIOS noted that 15 of the 24 partnership arrangements under the STI programme were not adequately documented. These partnerships were managed within the sub-units and involved collaborations for delivery of specific objectives within these sub-units. Due to lack of documentation, the level of collaboration of the two parties was not defined and the benefits arising from the partnerships could not be established. Details of undocumented partnerships are as follows:

- a. Knowledge management: In line with decisions 1/COP.9 and 4/COP.9, UNCCD developed a Partnership Strategy for the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal (SKBP) in 2013 which was later expanded and rebranded as the Knowledge Hub. According to the UNCCD website, SKBP was developed in partnership with seven institutions which were still listed as current partners on the website. At the time of the audit, documents outlining the nature of the partnership and the support provided by the seven partners were not readily available.
- b. Capacity building marketplace (CBM): OIOS identified nine partnership arrangements within CBM which were listed on the UNCCD website as having contributed to the success of CBM. Of these, only one partnership was formalized through a memorandum of understanding (MOU). According to the officer-in-charge of CBM, the other partnerships were collaborations that were informal in nature and were managed within the substantive unit.

34. The UNCCD partnership strategy did not specify the extent of involvement of the Legal Office during the establishment of the partnership arrangements. While many of the partnerships had been formalized and the legal instruments maintained by the UNCCD Legal Office, others remained informal with no evidence that staff members sought legal advice prior to establishing these collaborations with external parties to ensure that appropriate legal instruments were used to manage the various partnership collaborations. This was because the partnership strategy did not require the UNCCD Legal Officer to be involved or kept informed when entering into partnerships, so that appropriate legal advice is provided. By involving the Legal Office, suitable legal instruments could be established to ensure consistency and protect the interests of UNCCD.

(5) UNCCD should, in consultation with its Legal Office, ensure that all partnership arrangements within the Science, Technology and Implementation programme are formalized and documented in accordance with its partnership strategy.

UNCCD accepted recommendation 5 and stated that all future partnerships of the STI programme would be documented and evidence of them provided to the Legal Officer, in accordance with the partnership strategy. Recommendation 5 remains open pending receipt of evidence that all partnership arrangements within the STI programme are formalized and documented in accordance with the partnership strategy.

Partnership agreements were outdated and required revision

35. The implementation of the STI programme was organized around five regional implementation annexes. The RCUs under these five annexes were tasked with the responsibility of building regional partnerships with United Nations agencies and Regional Reference Centres, among others.

36. OIOS review of five partnership agreements for the RCU for Africa showed that one of the agreements established in October 1998 had expired in October 2001 but never renewed despite ongoing engagements between the RCU and the partner. Three other partnership arrangements which were established in 2005 and 2006 with inter-governmental and regional organizations were open-ended and long-term in nature and were renewed automatically every five years.

37. At the RCU for Central Eastern Europe, UNCCD signed a partnership agreement in June 2002. In September 2013, the Convention informed the partner of its interest in continuing the partnership and requested modification in certain areas of the MOU. OIOS was not provided with the response from the partner on the request for extension, and there was no evidence that the June 2002 agreement was amended and renewed based on UNCCD's request.

38. Following the adoption of the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework by COP decision 7/COP.13, it was essential for the Convention to assess whether existing partnership arrangements were aligned to the new strategic framework. While a review of existing partnerships was conducted in 2008 and 2016 to weed out those that were not aligned to the Convention's mandate, it was necessary to fine-tune the existing arrangements and make necessary revisions to enhance their strategic importance to the accomplishment of goal 15, target 15.3 of the SDGs. This was especially important for expired and open-ended partnership agreements that had been ongoing for a long time.

(6) UNCCD should review all partnership agreements under the Science, Technology and Implementation programme and ensure that they are up to date and aligned with the Convention's 2018-2030 Strategic Framework.

UNCCD accepted recommendation 6 and stated that the STI programme would review its existing partnership agreements in the first half of 2018, and update/align them with the Strategic Framework where relevant. Recommendation 6 remains open pending receipt of evidence of review, update and alignment of the STI programme partnership agreements with the Convention's 2018-2030 Strategic Framework.

Need to monitor implementation of partnership agreements

39. According to Annex 5 of the partnership strategy, staff members responsible for partnerships were required to track the implementation of partnerships using the agreement tracking journal which measured the level of achievement of a partnership's objectives and outcomes as stated in the partnership agreement, and included tools for tracking the progress. Through this document, staff members were supposed to link the partnerships directly to the Convention's work plan and also assess the partnership's contribution to expected outcomes as stipulated in the work plan. The document therefore provided a platform for systematic planning and monitoring of partnership arrangements.

40. The audit showed that the agreement tracking journal was never utilized. Consequently, there was no assurance that the partnerships were monitored regularly and assessed for relevance and alignment to the Convention's multi-year work plan.

(7) UNCCD should ensure that all partnership agreements for the Science, Technology and Implementation programme are monitored using the agreement tracking journal as outlined in the Convention's Partnership Strategy.

UNCCD accepted recommendation 7 and stated that in the first half of 2018, the STI programme will start monitoring all active partnership agreements using the agreement tracking journal. Recommendation 7 remains open pending receipt of evidence that the partnership agreements for the STI programme are monitored using the agreement tracking journal.

Need for a centralized database for managing partnerships

41. To improve internal communication and knowledge sharing, UNCCD established a common document management database which was initially managed using the Integrated Management System. Due to the high cost of implementing this system, management decided to establish an intranet-based database using Sharepoint to manage the Convention's internal knowledge-sharing and documentation.

42. In March 2017, UNCCD rolled out the Sharepoint platform through which the document management system was established. At the time of the audit, staff training on the use of the new system had not been completed and the centralized documentation of partnership documents in the new system had not yet commenced.

43. The UNCCD partnership agreements were currently stored by the Legal Officer in a shared folder but they were managed and monitored for implementation by the heads of the substantive units. Since the management of the agreements was decentralized, there was no mechanism for identifying agreements that were outdated or expired, so that they could be renewed in a timely manner and aligned to the new Strategic Framework. Recording of partnership information in the newly established centralized database would enable better oversight of existing partnerships, including centralized monitoring of performance and better coordination of interactions between UNCCD staff and partners to ensure that there were no duplications and inefficiencies.

(8) UNCCD should ensure that all partnership documents are maintained and managed from the newly established document management system.

UNCCD accepted recommendation 8 and stated that all partnership agreements had been included in the Sharepoint system. Recommendation 8 remains open pending receipt of documentation showing that partnership documents are maintained and managed in the newly established document management system.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

44. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNCCD for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

(Signed) Eleanor T. Burns
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Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the Science, Technology and Implementation programme at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	C/ O ³	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁴
1	UNCCD should establish a mechanism for tracking the implementation of all COP decisions and provide a status report on their implementation.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that implementation of COP decisions was being tracked and status reports were being produced.	31 August 2018
2	UNCCD should ensure that: (i) the Science, Technology and Implementation programme develops annual or biannual work plans showing the deliverables of each unit or function within the programme, the timelines of delivery and the persons responsible for delivery; and (ii) individual work plans of staff are linked to the programme work plans.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence: (i) of an approved and comprehensive work plan showing deliverables for each unit or function within the programme, the timelines of delivery and the persons responsible for delivery; and (ii) that individual staff work plans are linked to the programme work plan.	31 May 2018
3	UNCCD should ensure that outputs and corresponding outcomes are monitored and reported periodically as required by the Convention's operating procedures.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that outputs and outcomes were monitored and reported periodically.	31 August 2018
4	UNCCD should ensure that additional supervisors are included in the performance planning and evaluation process for staff whose roles and responsibilities transcend beyond those that fall under the Science, Technology and Implementation programme.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that additional supervisors are included in the performance planning and evaluation process for staff whose roles and responsibilities transcend beyond the STI programme.	31 March 2019
5	UNCCD should, in consultation with its Legal Office, ensure that all partnership arrangements within the Science, Technology and Implementation programme are formalized and documented in accordance with its partnership strategy.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that all partnership arrangements within the STI programme are formalized and documented in accordance with the partnership strategy.	31 January 2018

¹ Critical recommendations address critical and/or pervasive deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance cannot be provided with regard to the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

² Important recommendations address important (but not critical or pervasive) deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance may be at risk regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

³ C = closed, O = open

⁴ Date provided by UNCCD in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the Science, Technology and Implementation programme at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁵ / Important ⁶	C/ O ⁷	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁸
6	UNCCD should review all partnership agreements under the Science, Technology and Implementation programme and ensure that they are up to date and aligned with the Convention's 2018-2030 Strategic Framework.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of review, update and alignment of the STI programme partnership agreements with the Convention's 2018-2030 Strategic Framework.	30 June 2018
7	UNCCD should ensure that all partnership agreements for the Science, Technology and Implementation programme are monitored using the agreement tracking journal as outlined in the Convention's Partnership Strategy.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that the partnership agreements for the STI programme are monitored using the agreement tracking journal.	31 March 2018
8	UNCCD should ensure that all partnership documents are maintained and managed from the newly established document management system.	Important	O	Receipt of documentation showing that partnership documents are maintained and managed in the newly established document management system.	31 January 2018

⁵ Critical recommendations address critical and/or pervasive deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance cannot be provided with regard to the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

⁶ Important recommendations address important (but not critical or pervasive) deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance may be at risk regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

⁷ C = closed, O = open

⁸ Date provided by UNCCD in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Management Response

Management Response

Audit of the Science, Technology and Implementation programme at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	UNCCD should establish a mechanism for tracking the implementation of all COP decisions and provide a status report on their implementation.	Important	Yes	SR Programme Management Officer	Inclusion in work programme: February 2018 Monitoring: August 2018	COP decisions are listed in an excel sheet (enclosed) and responsible unit(s) are indicated for each relevant paragraph. The content of these paragraphs will be reflected in the UNCCD work programme for the biennium, and follow-up to implementation is monitored as part of the regular internal monitoring.
2	UNCCD should ensure that: (i) the Science, Technology and Implementation programme develops annual or biannual work plans showing the deliverables of each unit or function within the programme, the timelines of delivery and the persons responsible for delivery; and (ii) individual work plans of staff are linked to the programme work plans.	Important	Yes	(i) SR Programme Management Officer (ii) JMK Chief STI unit	(i) February 2018 (ii) May 2018	(i) STI work programme is developed with, and integrated into, the UNCCD corporate work programme for 2018-2019, which is built on the results framework that was approved by the COP. Each outcome and outcome indicator of the results framework is in the corporate work programme specified through targets and indicating a unit in charge for each target. Main outputs/deliverables and the unit in charge of each are also listed. (ii) Individual staff work plans (as PAS plans) are aligned with the unit work plan.
3	UNCCD should ensure that outputs and corresponding outcomes are monitored and reported periodically as required by the Convention's operating procedures.	Important	Yes	SR Programme Management Officer	August 2018	The secretariat and the GM will monitor progress toward the targets and delivery of the indicated outputs on a regular basis, approximately every six months. Internal monitoring will be the basis for reporting on

¹ Critical recommendations address critical and/or pervasive deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance cannot be provided with regard to the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

² Important recommendations address important (but not critical or pervasive) deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance may be at risk regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

Management Response

Audit of the Science, Technology and Implementation programme at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

						performance in meeting the expected outcomes to the COP.
4	UNCCD should ensure that additional supervisors are included in the performance planning and evaluation process for staff whose roles and responsibilities transcend beyond those that fall under the Science, Technology and Implementation Programme.	Important	Yes	JMK Chief STI unit	March 2019	Under the Performance Appraisal System (PAS) that is in use at the UNCCD, additional supervisors are usually not included in the (formal) staff planning and evaluation cycle. However, the secretariat will ensure that in the next PAS (April 2018-March 2019) they are given the opportunity to provide comments for staff members who are assigned specific tasks outside STI.
5	UNCCD should, in consultation with its Legal Office, ensure that all partnership arrangements within the Science, Technology and Implementation programme are formalized and documented in accordance with its partnership strategy.	Important	Yes	JMK Chief STI unit	Effective immediately	All future STI partnerships will be documented and evidence of them will be provided to the Legal Officer, in accordance with its partnership strategy.
6	UNCCD should review all partnership agreements under the Science, Technology and Implementation programme and ensure that they are up to date and aligned with the Convention's 2018-2030 Strategic Framework.	Important	Yes	JMK Chief STI unit	June 2018	STI will review its existing partnership agreements in the first half of 2018, and update/align them with the Strategic Framework where relevant.
7	UNCCD should ensure that all partnership agreements for the Science, Technology and Implementation programme are monitored using the agreement tracking journal as outlined in the Convention's Partnership Strategy.	Important	Yes	JMK Chief STI unit	First quarter 2018	In the first quarter of 2018, STI will start monitoring all active partnership agreements using the agreement tracking journal.
8	UNCCD should ensure that all partnership documents are maintained and managed from the newly established document management system.	Important	Yes	GGL Legal Officer	Effective immediately	All partnership agreements have been implemented in the Sharepoint system.